DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 886 CS 201 946

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TITLE Assessing Teachers' Needs, A First Step in Planning CBTE (Competency Based Teacher Education).
PUB DATE Mar 75
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on English Education (13th, Colorado Springs, March 20-22, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *English Instruction; *Language Arts; *Performance Based Teacher Education; *School Surveys; Secondary Education; *Teacher Education; Teacher Evaluation; Teachers; Teaching Quality

ABSTRACT

The first step in ascertaining the content areas in which prospective high school English teachers need preparation is to conduct a survey of teachers already in the schools. In this survey, teachers would rate both the importance of each content area in their teaching and their competence as teachers in those areas. After information from the surveys has been tabulated, courses and programs can be developed to teach the needed competencies and final evaluations of the programs can be conducted. (JM)

ED103886

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Thirteenth Annual Meeting

Conference on English Education

Colorado Springs, Colorado

ASSESSING TEACHERS' NEEDS, A FIRST STEP IN PLANNING CBTE

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March 20, 1975

Washtenaw Intermediate School District

Ann Arbor, Michigan

CS 201 946

Visualize for a moment the typical college English department coffee lounge on an average morning. There is a good deal of activity as one group of people grab a cup of coffee and head towards their classes. Another group, having just finished teaching, fill their cups in a more leisurely manner and settle into the decaying furniture for a moment to chat with colleagues.

The topics of conversation this morning are the usual; departmental politics, the frailties of the chairman, the frailties of the chairman compared and contrasted with the frailties of the dean (we do a lot of that kind of thing). Also commonly discussed are the rapidly falling enrollments, the rotten job market, the plight of recent graduates, and of course, sex.

While all of this activity is going on, off in one corner a rather intense young professor, oblivious to all the loud conversations around him, pours over a set of papers that he has just picked up from his class. Suddenly, to the astonishment of some of his colleagues, he throws the papers onto the floor, jumps on them a few times and demands to know from those around him "what do those damn English teachers in the high schools do?" The question is, of course, rhetorical. All those present, with the exception of a few who are suspect, no doubt feel that high school teachers certainly don't do anything that positively influences their students' ability to write, or to comprehend literature.

There is a rather strong irony with this view in that those same high school teachers being spoken of passed through this department, or one very much like it, and were trained in a curriculum established by the department. Many of the teaching behaviors they employ are the

result of modeling their university professors.

Teachers in the schools have generally those competencies that we in English and English education have trained them to have. If they have additional competencies, they have managed to get those in spite of us, not with our help.

The structuring of undergraduate and graduate English programs usually reflects the needs of the department and its faculty and not the real needs of those going out to teach in the schools. We rationalize our curriculum by saying students should have liberal educations and that a certain prescribed curriculum will provide for this. On closer examination, however, the needs of the faculty or some mindless tradition often dictate what courses will be required. If you have a large number of medievalists, Chaucer is an indispensable part of the curriculum. If a fair number of people in the department are interested in Faulkner, a course in Faulkner is a necessity to be liberally educated. My point here is that the course of study that we force our students through is based on our needs, little or no attention is paid to what they will need when they go out to teach. No attention is paid to what type of literacy skills are needed in this society.

My comments today are to be directed to how to evaluate competency based teacher education programs. Before I begin that section, I would like to briefly review how competent teachers feel about teaching in three areas: literature, composition, and grammar. The studies I am going to cite have been around since the sixties. I don't think, however, that enough change has taken place in the last few years to invalidate them in any way.

In their study, published in 1966, Squire and Applebee found that class time spent in the study of literature was 46 percent in the tenth

grade and 61.5 percent in the twelfth grade. They found that it was 40.8 percent in classes for terminal students. This is the area that teachers of English spend more time in instruction than any other single area in the English curriculum. It is also the area in which we require our students to do most of their preparation. With this in mind it is interesting to note that in 1964 NCTE's Committee on the National Interest found that only half (51.9 percent) of secondary English teachers considered themselves well prepared to teach literature.

In the area of grammar, the Committee on National Interest reported in 1961 that only 25 percent of the colleges required a course in the history of the English language and only 17.4 percent required a course in modern English grammar. In the Committee's second report in 1964 they found that only 53.5 percent of secondary English teachers felt well prepared to teach the English language.

Although English departments are now requiring more work in this area, my own experience has been that students commonly mention that they feel inadequately prepared to teach the different grammars.

As we look at composition and reading the situation becomes even grimmer. The Committee on National Interest in their 1964 study reported that only slightly more than a third, 36.6 percent of the secondary English teachers felt well prepared to teach composition. In 1966 Squire and Applebee reported information from a questionnaire that showed that teachers of English felt more deficient in composition than in language, literature, reading and speech.

The saddest figure of all is the one that deals with how incompetent teachers feel about their ability to teach reading. The Committee on National Interest reported that only 10.1 percent of the teachers felt

well prepared to teach reading and close to half, 46.9 percent, felt poorly prepared to teach reading. The ability to read and comprehend is the basic prerequisite skill to almost everything that we do in an English class and yet the vast majority of teachers feel poorly prepared to teach this subject.

Let me now turn to the topic of this session, evaluation of competency based teacher education programs. We generally talk about three types of variables when we discuss competency based programs. The first, the teacher behavior variable, deals with such things as clarity, the ability to ask questions, criticize, probe, be task oriented, etc. The second variable is the sociological variable, the ability to understand and use behaviors that will allow a teacher to work effectively in a given environment. The last variable, the one I wish to deal with today, is the content variable.

In the evaluation of a competency based teacher education program are three important steps to which attention needs to be paid.

The first step is to establish what competencies need to be taught. The second step is to evaluate whether or not the program that has been developed is based on these needed competencies. The final step is to evaluate students in the program to see if they have mastered the needed competencies.

Let us first look at step one, how do we determine what competencies students should master? What should be the goals and priorities of a teacher education program in English?

A sound way to approach this is to go out to the schools and to determine through the use of a survey what teachers of English are actually doing in the schools, what areas they feel adequately prepared for

and what areas are they not adequately prepared for. This process is often called a needs assessment. This kind of information is necessary to determine what content competencies should be taught to the students. It should be added that this type of information is not only useful in preparing undergraduate programs, but is also a useful way to develop inservice programs and summer institutes.

At the beginning of this speech I handed out a survey instrument. I developed this instrument for this speech; it is crude and needs much refinement; it is only to be used as an example of how a survey instrument may be constructed.

There are several steps in the process that I used.

The first is to develop a list of content areas in which teachers may be working.

Under "Importance of Content Area" on your teacher needs survey you will find a list of common content areas taught in a secondary English class. I pulled this list off the top of my head. Obviously there are other areas that should be looked at and many of these areas could be easily divided and sub-divided. As teachers work through this list they indicate on a 1 - 5 scale which areas are of the greatest importance in their teaching.

After they have finished this task they rate how competent they feel in teaching each area.

For example, they may rate reading (essential to any program) as "1" on the "Importance of Content Area" scale. On the "Competence as a Teacher" scale they may rank themselves as poorly prepared, or "1." By simply adding the two numbers together we get "2" which indicates high importance and high need.

Contrast this with a second example. Suppose a teacher ranks

English Literature as "useful" or "3" and ranks her preparation as "well prepared" or "3." By adding these two numbers we get a "6" which indicates that it is not as high a priority as reading.

When this survey is given to large numbers of people you simply establish mean scores for each category and list them in order, the lowest numbers being those of highest priority.

Who should be surveyed? Specific groups should be identified and surveyed independently of one another. You should survey English teachers in city schools, suburban schools and rural schools. They might have specific needs that differ significantly from one another. This information could aid students in preparing for the type of school in which they planned to teach. Another important category would be recent graduates. You could also survey curriculum supervisors, administrators, and other professionals. The results from these different groups should be compared before any goals are established for the program.

After the information from these surveys is tabulated it is easy to see what the needs are and what the priorities of a teacher training program should be. Now goals can be written and specific performance objectives for each area can be developed.

At this point the real work begins, the development of courses and programs that teach to the identified needed competencies. Students would move through the program as they demonstrated that they had obtained these competencies. The final evaluation of the program would be to show that its graduates had those content area competencies needed to effectively teach in the secondary schools.

In a few places this type of teacher training program is beginning. In the vast majority of universities and colleges it is, at best, in the distant future. We can, however, begin to make small steps in this

direction by beefing up courses currently in the curriculum and addressing those courses to needed competencies. Current language, composition and literature courses can all be built around competency units or modules. In addition, new courses and programs, including inservice courses for those already in the field will have to be continuously developed. English departments will have to become sensitive to the changing needs of secondary teachers and offer them courses that will provide them with needed competencies.

TEACHER NEEDS SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: Read the following list of content areas and decide how important each is in your teaching. Rate the importance of each on the "Importance of Content Area" scale. Then rate how competent you yourself to be as a teacher of each of these content areas on the "Competence as a Teacher in Content Area" scale.

	Importance of Content Area in Your Teaching						Competence as a Teacher in Content Area				
	Essential (1)	Desirable (2)	Useful (3)	Can Be Omitted (4)	Unnecessary (5)		Strongest Area (4)	Well Prepared (3)	Adequately Prepared (2)	Poorly Prepared (1)	Complete Unfamiliarity (0)
Composition											
Language History											
Structural Linguistics											
Transformational Generative Grammar											
Traditional Grammar											
Remedial Reading											
Advanced Reading Skills											
World Literature											
English Literature											
Multi-Ethnic Literature											
American Literature											
Adolescent Literature											
Drama											
Poetry											
Film and Media											
Creative Dramatics											
Speech											
Discussion											
Debate											
Research and Library Skills											